DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 132 458 CG 007 061

AUTHOR Haase, Richard F.
TITLE The Relationship of Personality Characteristics to Paralinguistic Behavior in the Interview.
PUB DATE [71]
NOTE 3p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; Comparative Analysis; *Individual Characteristics; *Linguistic Patterns; *Paralinguistics; *Personality Assessment; Personality Tests; Psychological Studies; Speech Habits; *Verbal Communication
IDENTIFIERS *Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire

ABSTRACT

Thirty-six subjects were administered the 16PF and participated in a brief, unstructured interview. Paralinguistic behavior (fluency, duration and speech rate) were scored from tapes of the interviews and correlated to personality characteristics. Four significant relationships emerged revealing that fluency is related to adventurousness; duration is related to maturity and superego strength; and speech rate is related to surgency. The relationship between personality and nonverbal behaviors is discussed with reference to diagnosis and communication in counseling-like interviews. (Author)

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ED132458

Richard F. Haase
243 Whitmore
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002

# The Relationship of Personality Characteristics to Paralinguistic Behavior in the Interview

Richard F. Haase
University of Massachusetts

That nonverbal behavior is an important component of the communication process has been well established. Areas of nonverbal behavior which have received extensive discussion include those of kinesics, proxemics, and paralinguistics (cf. Duncan, 1969).

The inclusion of paralinguistic cues in the study of counseling would seem appropriate insofar as counseling can be conceived of as a communication process. The area has received some attention. The work of Mattarazzo et. al. (1965), Mahl (1966) and Wiener and Mehrabian (1966) have done considerable work in the area of paralinguistic aspects of communication, the former two, specifically with respect to interview situations. The literature has already linked paralinguistic communicational features to emotional states of the subject. Relatively little research, however, has focused on personological characteristics of the subject and patterns of paralinguistic behavior. For the most part, paralinguistic behavior has been studied as a function of situational states, e.g., anxiety (Murray, 1971).

The present study sought to examine the relationship between selected personality characteristics and three paralinguistic indices - total number of words spoken, total duration of speech, and speech rate.

## Method

Subjects included 36 male students who had volunteered for a study in interviewing. A standardized interview of six minutes was conducted, where the subject was invited to talk about anything he liked. The responses of the interviewer were completely randomized on a variable ratio schedule and included paraphrases and "um-hmm". Interviewer responses were cued by lights connected to a clock apparatus in another room. Subjects were also administered the 16 Personality Factors Questionnaire (Cattell, 1962).

Each six minute interview period was typescripted and the total number of words was counted. Total duration of speech was timed from the tape recordings. Speech rate was obtained by a ratio of total words to duration.

## Results and Discussion

Pearson product-moment correlations were obtained between the 16PF variables and the three paralinguistic variables. Four personality variables were significantly correlated to the dependent variables.

When correlated to the paralinguistic variable of fluency, only factor H yilded a significant r (.39). The tendency to emit a greater number of words is positively related to the person who tends to be adventurous rather than timid. Such a person is described by Cattell (1962) as sociable, spontaneous and does not lack emotional responsiveness. He can, however, "consume much time talking." The relationship reported here would seem to validate this characteristic.

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Regarding the duration of one's speech, Factors C and G correlate significantly (r = .34 and .39). The person who is described as mature rather than emotional and conscientious rather than casual tends to talk for longer periods of time. Such a person can be described as mature, stable, calm, persevering, responsible, determined and energetic. The correlation reported here would seem to suggest a quality of maturity associated with duration of speech.

Finally, one 16PF factor correlated significantly with speech rate (r = .36). Factor F represents the person who is enthusiastic rather than glum and silent. The high scorer on this scale tends to be cheerful, talkative, frank and expressive. That this factor should be significantly related to speech rate or verbal velocity is not surprising and indeed logical.

While the correlations reported here might suggest a relationship between dispositional psychological characteristics and paralinguistic behavior, they must be looked upon as exploratory. While the findings of the present study are encouraging, replication and further exploration of the relationships between personality characteristics and paralinguistic behavior is necessary.

The scientific value of such studies resides in the more thorough understanding of the communicational characteristics of various personality types and the consequent development of additional diagnostic scales for validating judgements of a personological nature.

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